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214 PORTRAIT OF COPPENOL, 285.

(Grand Portrait de Lieven Coppenol 175.)

State before the plate was reduced.

Date assumed, 1661.

Lent by ALFRED MORRISON, Esq.



ILLUSTRATED CATALOGUE

OF

ETCHINGS

LIBER STUDIORUM & ENGRAVINGS,

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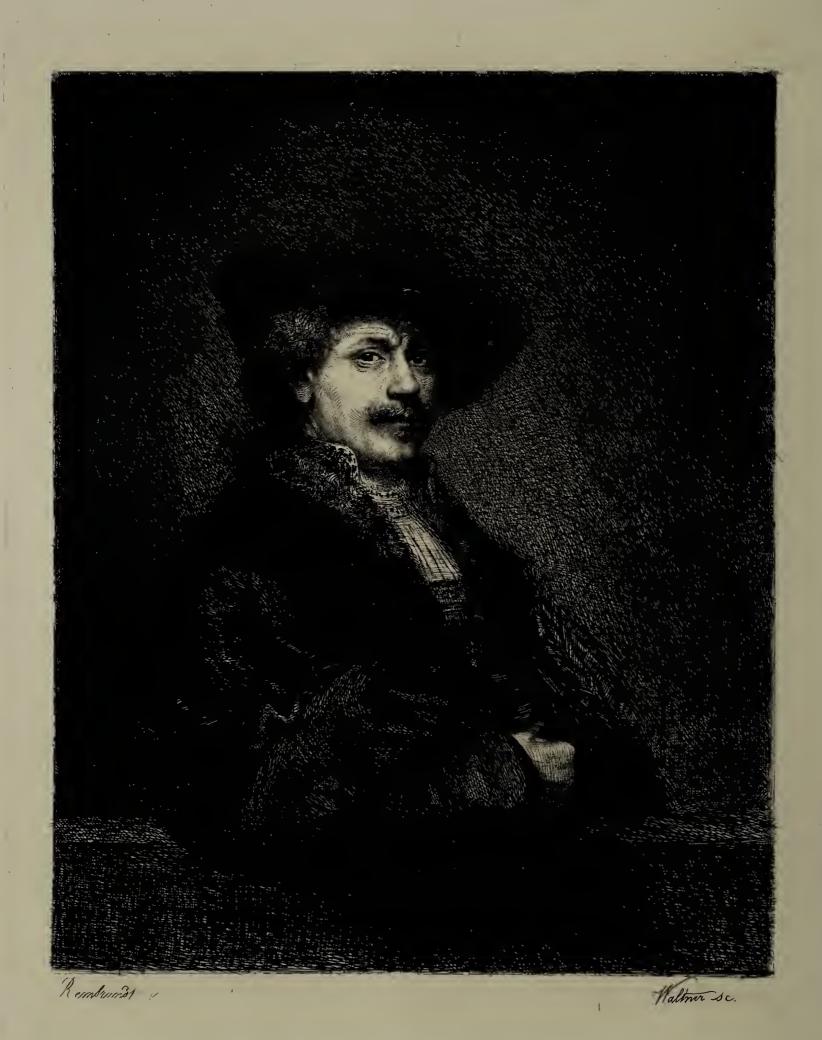
THE FINE ART SOCIETY.

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ETCHING IN ENGLAND.

From Cassell's 'MAGAZINE OF ART.'

In these days of universal knowledge it may, perhaps, be considered an audacity to commence with definitions, and with explaining what an etching really is, and in what its merits consist. But as there is no word in the language of art which is more misapplied, and as assuredly there is no branch of art which is more rapidly forcing its way into the notice of the English art-loving world than Etching, the liberty will, we trust, be condoned.

No clue to the origin of the word is to be found, either in the hand-books, or the more elaborated works, on etching; its derivation is undoubtedly German, being found in aetzen, to feed, corrode, macerate; representing the feeding of the aquafortis on the copper, where it is exposed through the varnish being removed by the needle: thus a real etching is an engraving on a plate of copper made by means of the surface—first covered with varnish—being exposed by a needle, and eaten into by acid. This being so, neither a pen-and-ink drawing, nor what is known as a 'dry point' etching (being an engraving made by a series of furrows cut with a needle, or burin, into a plate of metal), can with any degree of rightness be classed under the heading of etchings.

And now as to the qualities which must be inherent in an etching, if it is to be a good and enduring work.

First and foremost, every line must evidence thought—artistic thought, thought in selecting only what an etching can properly interpret, and leaving all else; remembrance that there is no repentance, that the line once made must endure for ever, as perpetual evidence either of rightful precept or of useless work.

Next, the lines must show *power*—athletic power, knowledge of subject, indications that the whole has been grasped and comprehended before it has been entered on; the power, however, remaining obedient, the facile hand and supple wrist following as the servant of the brain.

Still further, it must possess individuality, no servile following in the wake of a master.

Lastly, at every point it must blossom with truth, every line must show that no fancy, no endeavour at pleasing the beholder, has been sought after, but that a fearless and conscientious following after truth has been the sole and only aim.

Having thus distinguished between what is etching, and what is not, and having ascertained the virtues which go to make it everlasting, we at once proceed to trace the growth of English etching, and shortly review the present conditions of the art in this country.

To arrive at its founders does not require a prolonged survey of the past.

If Hollar and Vandyke, who really were not Englishmen, be excepted, the commencement of the present century may be taken as its starting-point. Turner was almost the first to attempt it, but it was only his rivalry of Claude and his 'Liber Veritatis,' and as a consequence his issue of the 'Liber Studiorum,' that made him employ it. Of course he succeeded magnificently, and his etchings have, so far as landscape is concerned, never been surpassed. Though they were intended merely as foundations for a superstructure of mezzotint, many of them are more highly prized in their early condition than in the finished state of the plate. Amongst such may be mentioned 'Æsacus and Hesperie,' 'The Stork and the Aqueduct,' and 'Jason.'

Wilkie and Geddes are the only etchers of note who connect Turner's work in the early years of the century with 1840, when the Etching Club was formed. That club had its origin more in conviviality than in any earnest desire to foster the art. Its efforts, and those of the Junior Etching Club, resulted only in the production of a volume now and again, combining the fatal errors of being prettily got up and appealing to popular taste. Would space permit, it could be shown how the very smallness in the size of the volume inflicted a mortal wound on its authors, just as the exaggerated size of the publications of the French Club has been a source of much weakness to them.

The most noteworthy of the Etching Club issues were: 'The Deserted Village,' 1841; 'Etched Thoughts,' 1844; Gray's 'Elegy,' 1847; 'L'Allegro,' 1849; 'Songs of Shakespeare,' 1852; 'Volumes of Etchings,' 1857 and 1865.

Scattered throughout the pages of these volumes will be found the products of artists of such household names as Millais, Cope, Ansdell, Frith, Fred. Taylor, Redgrave, Samuel Palmer, and Hook—all the etchers of the day, with the exception of Ruskin and Cruikshank.

The majority of these etchings will at once impress, even the eye uneducated to the art, with the palpable attempt of the artist to convey in his etching a similarity to his painted work; an endeavour to imitate, with considerable labour, by means of the needle on the plate, the effect of the brush and the paint on the canvas, little witting that by so doing he transgressed the first rule of etching, and may be said, at the outset, to have ceased to be a true etcher.

Ruskin, speaking of three engravers, representative of the early, the central, and the modern

'Botticelli wants with as little engraving as much Sibyl as possible. For his head is full of Sibyls, and his heart. He can't draw them fast enough: one comes, and another, and another, to be engraved for ever, if only he had a thousand hands and lives. He scratches down one, with no haste, with no fault, divinely careful, scrupulous, patient, but with as few lines as possible. Another Sibyl—let me draw another, for Heaven's sake, before she has burnt all her books and vanished.

'Dürer is eactly Botticelli's opposite. He is a workman to the heart, and will do his work magnificently. But anything will do; a Sibyl, a skull, a Madonna and Christ, a hat and feather,

a pig with five legs. But see if I don't show you what engraving is!

Beaugrand wants as much Sibyl and as much engraving as possible. He has no ideas of his own, but deep reverence and love for the works of others, and will give his life to represent another man's thoughts.'

These forcible distinctions between the different methods of engraving are still more applicable with regard to etching, which, as the same master says, 'can never but be comparatively incomplete; for it must be done throughout with the full force of temper, visibly governing its lines, as the wind does the fibres of clouds.'

But to return to our subject. It can well be imagined that the spasmodic efforts of the etching clubs were futile to raise any interest in the English branch of the art. The etchers of the day could not, with justice, quote the unheard-of prices that were then being given for works of the great foreign masters-eleven hundred guineas for the Hundred Guilder print, and a hundred and twenty pounds for a Rembrandt that thirty years before had fetched but thirty shillings—and say that a prophet is not without honour save in his own country—for they themselves were producing nothing of any worth.

In what way, then, was the public interest in etching awakened? By the Academy, the national training school for art? Mr. Hamerton, in his 'Etching and Etchers,' shows the assistance accorded to it in 1868 by the Royal Academy. He describes how, in the least corner of the least room in Trafalgar Square, the great art obscurely dwelt. How a placard with the word 'Engravings' was posted up outside, lest visitors should miss the room altogether. How one day the words 'and Etchings' appeared, in pencil, written underneath the big black printed word 'Engravings;' and how touched he was by this tardy recognition of his beloved art, until he found that it had not been added by academical authority, but by a lover of etchings and hater of academies just to let the people know that the art was in existence. And as the and hater of academies, just to let the people know that the art was in existence. And as the same treatment has been pursued down to the present day,* the Academy clearly has had nothing to do with it. Whence, then, has it sprung?

It may, probably, be traced to a twofold, or perhaps a threefold source.

First, the appearance about the same time of two thorough etchers—James Abbott Macneil Whistler, and Francis Seymour Haden.

Secondly, of an advocate able to impress upon the world the value of theirs and such-like work, the advocate being Philip Gilbert Hamerton.

Thirdly, but in a less degree, by the institution of an Exhibition—'The Black and White.' This Exhibition has done much, and, we hope, will in the future do still more for English art. It has opened an outlet for the sale of the black and white studies which should be the forerunners of every picture, but which, so long as he could find no market for them, the English artist was fain to forego. Still we are obliged to say that the Exhibition has only assisted etching in a less degree, for this reason. In the Egyptian Hall etchings have to scramble for position with demonstrative efforts of every hue, the products of the crayon, the brush, the pencil, and the pen. Diminutive in size, through the teachings of their school, and delicate in treatment, they so shrink away amongst their more forcible comrades that they are never seen save at a disadvantage. And so one searches in vain for the works of the best etchers on the walls.

^{*} In last year's Exhibition, out of a total of 1547 works, but seventy-five are etchings and engravings.

Mr. Whistler, an American by birth, commenced his art career in the studio of Gleyre at Paris. Whilst there he published his first etchings in November, 1858, under the title, 'Douze Eaux-fortes d'après Nature, par James Whistler,' dedicated 'à mon vieil ami, Seymour Haden.' They show much careful work and honest etching, 'La Marchande de Moutarde' and 'The Kitchen' being pre-eminent. The title-page represents the artist himself engaged in making the drawings from which the series were executed, and surrounded by gamins doing their best to render his task an impossibility. These and some score of others, amongst which may be named 'Little Seymour,' and a portrait of his printer, A. Delâtre, were the sum of his labours in and prior to the year 1859, when he came to England. Once here, he took up his residence upon* and on the banks of the Thames, and produced the series of etchings upon which his fame as an etcher will rest.

From Battersea, in full view of which he occupied until very recently a house (it forms the subject of one of Mr. Haden's best etchings), down to Wapping, Mr. Whistler etched the river at every turn. Chelsea Bridge, Cadogan Pier, Vauxhall, the Houses of Parliament, Old Westminster and Hungerford Suspension Bridges—these were amongst his subjects above bridge; whilst below he drew in an inimitable manner every nook and cranny of the quaint old warehouses and wharfs at Limehouse, Rotherhithe, Billingsgate, and the Pool. Sixteen of the foregoing subjects were published in 1871, by Messrs. Ellis and Green, the issue being limited to 100 copies of each.†

During the years 1860-2, he principally, so far as etching was concerned, directed his attention to making etchings from sketches, previously made, of Breton and Parisian life. He was at this time an exhibitor in the Royal Academy, his 'Lady at the Piano' being much commented on in the former of these years. A visit in 1863 to Holland, in company with Mr. Haden, resulted in but two etchings, one of the river at Amsterdam, entitled 'The Tolhuis,' the other of two figures. Neither of them has been published.

A collector of his works anterior to this time has not been able to find more than seventy etchings, and that number would include everything up to the year 1872, since which date Mr. Whistler has almost exclusively confined himself to 'dry points,' executed more as illustrations of the 'harmonies' which, at the Grosvenor Gallery and elsewhere, have excited more varied criticism than aught else. The last year or two have seen him occupied, amongst other things, in the decoration of Mr. Leyland's magnificent house, and his own newly erected one near the Chelsea Embankment, and in illustrations of the London streets for the pages of *Vanity Fair*, and the defunct *Piccadilly*. The acquisition of the majority of Mr. Whistler's etchings has always been a matter of some difficulty, the following being the only ones that have been really published:—The French set of twelve and a title; the sixteen Thames etchings before mentioned; 'Billingsgate,' issued in the *Portfolio*, January 1878; Limehouse, published 1878.

Mr. Haden was born in the year 1818. Educated at the London University, he in his twentieth year was studying medicine at the Sorbonne in Paris. In 1839 he attached himself to the hospital at Grenoble. In 1840 he was again at Paris, and having in 1842 become Medallist of the University of London, and Member of the College of Surgeons, he passed the years 1843-4 in Italy. On his return to London he soon acquired a considerable and rapidly increasing practice as a surgeon. In 1851 he was instrumental in founding the Hospital for Incurables, and at the Great Exhibition in that year, and again in 1862, he was a juror.

It may well be asked, how was all this compatible with success as an etcher? It came about thus:—When at Grenoble he had paved the way for future distinction as a draughtsman by a lengthened study of the human body. This had been followed up by the advantage when in Italy of a close acquaintance with a French artist of note, under whose tutelage many a drawing in water-colour was undertaken. But above all, during these years, Mr. Haden had been an admirer of the works of Rembrandt, and a collector, not for the sake of mere acquisition, but for the purpose of information and comparison. So that when, in the year 1859, the tension of a heavy practice broke down his health, and necessitated a temporary rest, what more natural than that the student of Rembrandt should, during his abstention from work, take up the needle and try his hand on the copper? The result was the 'Etudes à l'Eau-forte.' Published in Paris and in London, both there and here the highest praise was meted out to them, and according to Mr. Hamerton, to this work alone is to be ascribed the revival of the interest in etchings. Mr. Haden, in writing of them, describes how they were produced: 'tout était fait dans un accès, une fureur de plaisir, et était fini le soir même.' With renewed health the etcher terminated what he termed as 'une courte et délicieuse vie d'artiste, un fort petit épisode, un jour de fête, pour ainsi dire, dans une carrière longue et laborieuse;' and until the issue some three years back, of the magnificent plate of 'Calais Pier,' no further work of any importance was undertaken by him. Quite recently a set of twelve plates have been published,‡ but several were executed some years ago.

The total of Mr. Haden's etchings are between seventy and eighty, the most noteworthy being

‡ These can also be seen at the Fine Art Society.

^{*} For some time he actually lived in a boat on the river.
† Proofs of these can be obtained of The Fine Art Society, price 14 guineas the set. See list of Mr. Whistler's Etchings.

'The Calais Pier' (after Turner), 'The Breaking-up of the Agamemnon,' Shere Mill Pond,' Battersea Reach,' A By-road in Tipperary,' and The Berthe Laure of Paris,' a rare proof of which sold for £22 at a recent sale. The Etudes,' however, are the most characteristic illustrations of his work. The 250* sets which were published were originally issued at fifteen guineas. They now command at least double that price, and will probably continue to rise in value.

It will be seen from what we have said, that neither of these etchers has in any way intruded their works upon the public—nay, rather the reverse—for Mr. Whistler plumes himself upon his works being 'ungetatable' and rare; probably from the very proper notion that that which is easily procurable is not valued; and Mr. Haden is beyond measure particular that nothing of his shall be promulgated except what is first-rate, not only as to work, but condition.† Therefore, were it not that Mr. Haden has, by loans to exhibitions of his Rembrandts and valuable treatises thereon, imparted much information on the subject of etchings, it might with truth be said that in no way save as producers of good work have either assisted in forwarding the English school of etchings. Its rise in popularity may therefore, to so much the greater extent, be attributed to Mr. Hamerton.

His first work, 'Etching and Etchers,' is too well known to need extended comment here. The fact that, originally published at a guinea and a half, it is not now easy to obtain at four times that amount, speaks as to the value set upon it by the connoisseur. 'A Manual on Etching' was quickly followed by the first number of the 'Portfolio' magazine, which, devoted almost exclusively to the editor's favourite branch of art, has during its ten years' life been instant in promoting and extending the limits of its popularity. It is a daunting fact, however, and one not easily explained, that whilst it has succeeded in increasing the love for etchings, it has as yet entirely failed to raise up a school of etchers in England. At the outset, each successive month saw an illustration of an English etcher's work. But less than a year sufficed to run through the cycle of their number, and when it is proposed to reproduce by etchings the principal pictures in our National Gallery, the task is entrusted to foreigners, and very recently a Frenchman has been selected to illustrate the life of Turner! Nor is this exclusion of Englishmen confined to the 'Portfolio' Etchings of several Academy pictures and portraits have of late years been published, but invariably the work has been handed over to foreigners—testimony of the most impartial kind, that if in England the taste for etchings has increased, the etchers themselves have not. There is probably no branch of art in which such an opening exists as in that of figure etching, for at present we do not possess a single etcher in that line.

The forward march of etchings was for a considerable period hampered by the action of the printsellers themselves. By a rule of the Association under which they are banded together, they were prohibited from selling any proofs above a certain value, unless such proofs were the property of one of themselves, had been stamped with the stamp of their Association, and had been printed by one of their number. An etcher of any standing naturally revolted against such restrictions, for thereby not only was the printing, but the control of the issue of his productions, taken altogether out of his hands. After a lengthy struggle, in which the etchers were aided by the principal houses in the trade, the rule has been annulled, so far as etchings are concerned, and we may, as a consequence, expect material improvement in the prospects of this branch of the arts, from the greater publicity that will now be afforded to it.

A few words of warning to the would-be collector may well close this article. In etchings, more than in aught else, it is the fashion to pay extravagant prices for rare states. An example of this was seen some years ago in the case of Rembrandt's 'Sleeping Dog.' Originally etched in the corner of a plate, he afterwards cut it down. Only one impression of this early state is known, and for this the British Museum gave 120%; the only difference between it and an ordinary copy being, six square inches of white paper, which Rembrandt considered injurious to his etching. The same system is occurring every day. At a sale a few months ago, what was described as a unique trial proof of 'Egham Lock,' by Mr. Haden, sold for nine guineas. It had, as a foreground, troubled water. The artist in this case at once thought the plate would be improved by quieting the water, and a second impression showed the improvement; but this decidedly superior etching fetched but three pounds. If a collector of etchings will but remember that an etching is not good, or a desirable possession, because it is rare; if, before he purchases, he bears in mind, looks for, and insists on having, the qualities we have shown to be a necessity to lasting work; if he will learn to value his etchings because they possess these qualities, and not because he has what his neighbour has not, he will become a benefactor to art, and a true connoisseur, and he will leave the ranks of those foolish ones who rush in and buy a work, either because it is the fashion, or because it has a name, without waiting to examine into its merits, or even troubling to seek out what they possibly are.

M. B. H.

† Both print every copy of every etching they issue themselves.

^{* 180} sets only were printed, owing to the failure of some of the more delicate plates.





ETCHINGS,

LIBER STUDIORUM, & ENGRAVINGS.

Please understand that this List varies from time to time as Sales occur, but the majority of the subjects contained therein are always in Stock.

HADEN (FRANCIS SEYMOUR).

THE NEW ETCHINGS,

'WINDSOR' AND 'GREENWICH.'

THE first of these Etchings, 'WINDSOR,' is now ready for delivery.

The view taken is of the town and older part of the Castle, from the creek used by the Etonians for bathing.

The main river, the course of which is indicated by the barge at anchor, runs at right angles with the creek, passing under the Castle and between it and the mass of trees which form the left foreground.

The hazy tone of the distant Castle, the long line of cumulus behind it, and the few flocculent clouds above, the drooping flag, the motionless sail, and the bathers, are intended to suggest a bright and tranquil day, and to contrast with the more sombre character, rougher scene, and later hour of 'Greenwich.'

The 'GREENWICH' will be ready on the 1st of May.

The Plates of each of these Etchings will be printed at Mr. HADEN'S press, and are under his control as to limitation of impression; and each copy issued will bear his signature, in proof of its being as good an impression as can be taken from the Plates.

In framing, the impression should be laid under a sunk mount showing an inch

and a half of the paper all round, and should not be allowed to touch the glass by about the eighth of an inch. It must not be subject to pressure of any kind till the ink has become thoroughly dry, which will not be the case for some months.

The price of each Plate is Eight Guineas, or mounted on hand-made mounts and framed in specially prepared frames, £10, £10 10s., and £11 11s.

HADEN (Francis Seymour), continued.

N.B.—Those marked with an asterisk are now published for the first time.

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MÉRYON (C.).

Born at Paris, 1821, of English origin, a man of tender soul, probably derived from his mother. In 1837 he went to the Naval School at Brest. He made several voyages, and from 1842 to 1846 he circumnavigated the globe in the corvette Le Rhin. On account of his delicate constitution he gave up the sea-service. Whereupon he writes:- 'A few words on my past life as a naval officer. I wore the epaulette but a short time. I laid it aside simply because I did not feel sufficiently strong, either physically or morally, to command in all circumstances men, the majority of whom I consider as the most devoted, the most honourable, the best that can be met with. It is with a profound sentiment of sincerity that I feel honoured in having spent the best part of my youth in the midst of such men, whether officers or sailors. The above-mentioned reason, joined to a natural inclination I have always had for the arts, has made me venture upon the path on which I now walk.'

Méryon returned to Paris, 1847; he painted pictures, in which he failed; for although he possessed in a consummate degree a knowledge of the relative value of light and shade, either his eyes did not appreciate, or his hands could not manipulate, colour. He thereupon acquired his first notions on the art of etching, of which he ultimately became the great master. To exercise himself in the etching point he made copies of the old masters. His genius was rapidly developing, and Victor Hugo wrote of his works:-- These etchings are magnificent things; this fine imagination should not be fettered in the great contest which it is waging—now in contemplating the ocean—now in contemplating Paris the breath of the infinite traverses the works of M. Méryon, and makes his etchings more than pictures -visions.'

Old Paris was being demolished; the picturesque swept away; and monuments, revered for their historical associations, ruthlessly destroyed, to be replaced by the monotonous and dreary productions of Imperial Communism. Méryon set to work to preserve, ere it was too late, records of the poetry of old Paris; and produced, with his etching needle, the most marvellous series of works of our time: full of power, of truth, yet of tragic mystery: preserving the details of architecture, he filled up his works with the reflex melancholy of his own soul. But to live he must sell. He had not yet made taste to admire his works; publishers and buyers would have nothing to do with them. Modest, nervous, tongue-tied, and irritable, he tramped Paris with his folios of etchings, but beyond placing a few impressions in the hands of dealers, who sold little and paid less, neither public nor private taste, nor patronage, did anything for him. In a fit of despair he destroyed the copper plates. Darker days set in upon him, and he passed into-worse than the valley of the shadow of death-the madhouse of Charenton, whence he was released by death.

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Born in 1815 at Gréville, in La Manche, and died January, 1875, at Barbison, near Fontaine-bleau. He was the son of a peasant, but early showed genius for painting; and the municipality of Gréville subscribed 600 francs to send him to Paris, where he studied under Paul Delaroche. He became the pathetic and poet painter of nature and the peasantry—of 'Sowers,' 'Haymakers,' 'Reapers,' 'Shepherds,' 'Gleaners,' 'Knitters.' Millet married young, had fourteen children, and lived the simplest life. He painted slowly, as he said he loved to see his pictures grow. They produced him little in his lifetime, though they are a fortune to those who now possess them. With Corot, Rousseau, Frère, and others, Millet founded a school on the love of nature and humanity. Solemn, not cynical; subtle, not ascetic; truthful, not flashy; laborious—for ever seeking a higher and a higher standard. 'In his Art,' said the Athenaum, the week after his death, 'Millet came nearer to Rembrandt than any of the Moderns in dealing sometimes with unbounded wealth of light, sometimes with worlds of shade—now producing ineffable mysteries of tone, then seeming to meditate in a solemn paradise of colour.' He did a few etchings of remarkable power, expression, and pathos.

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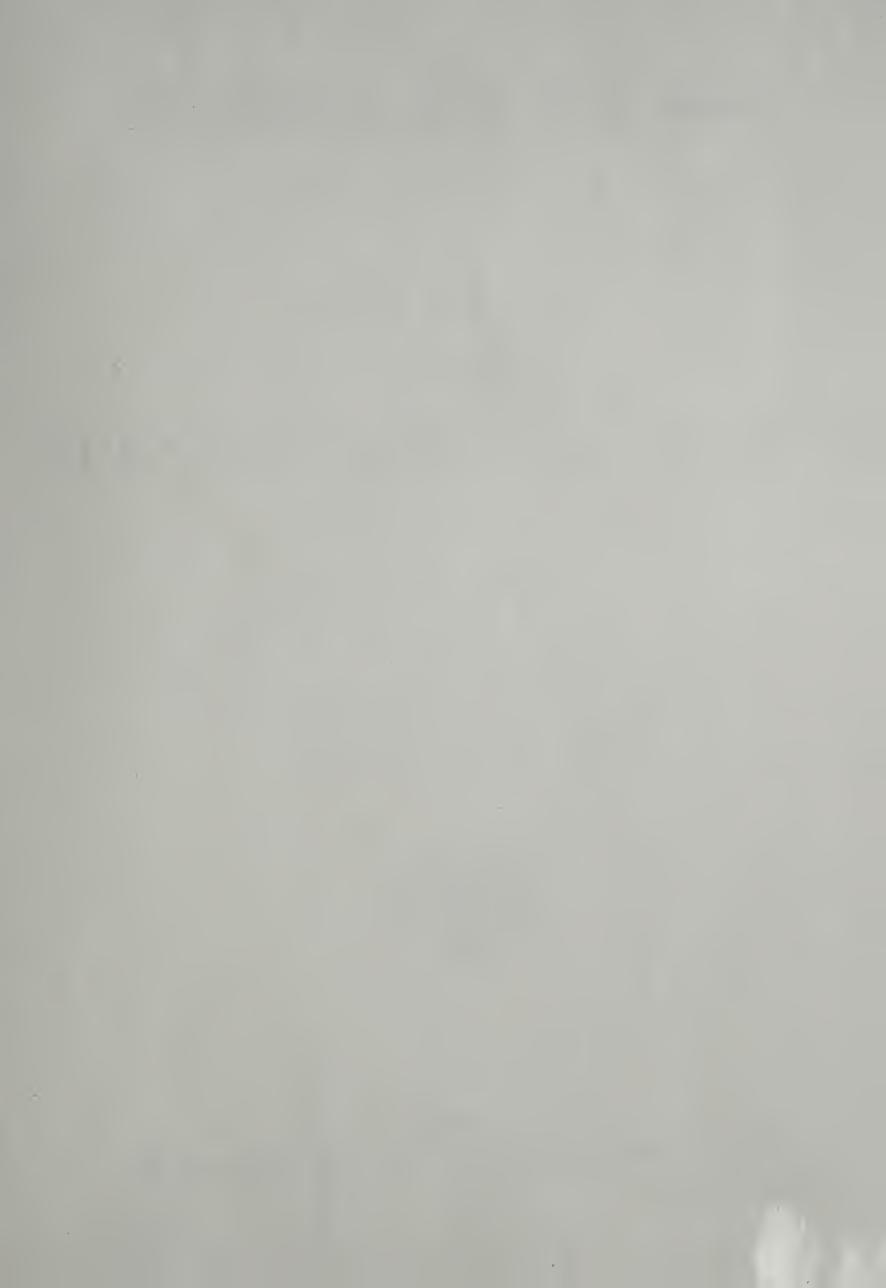
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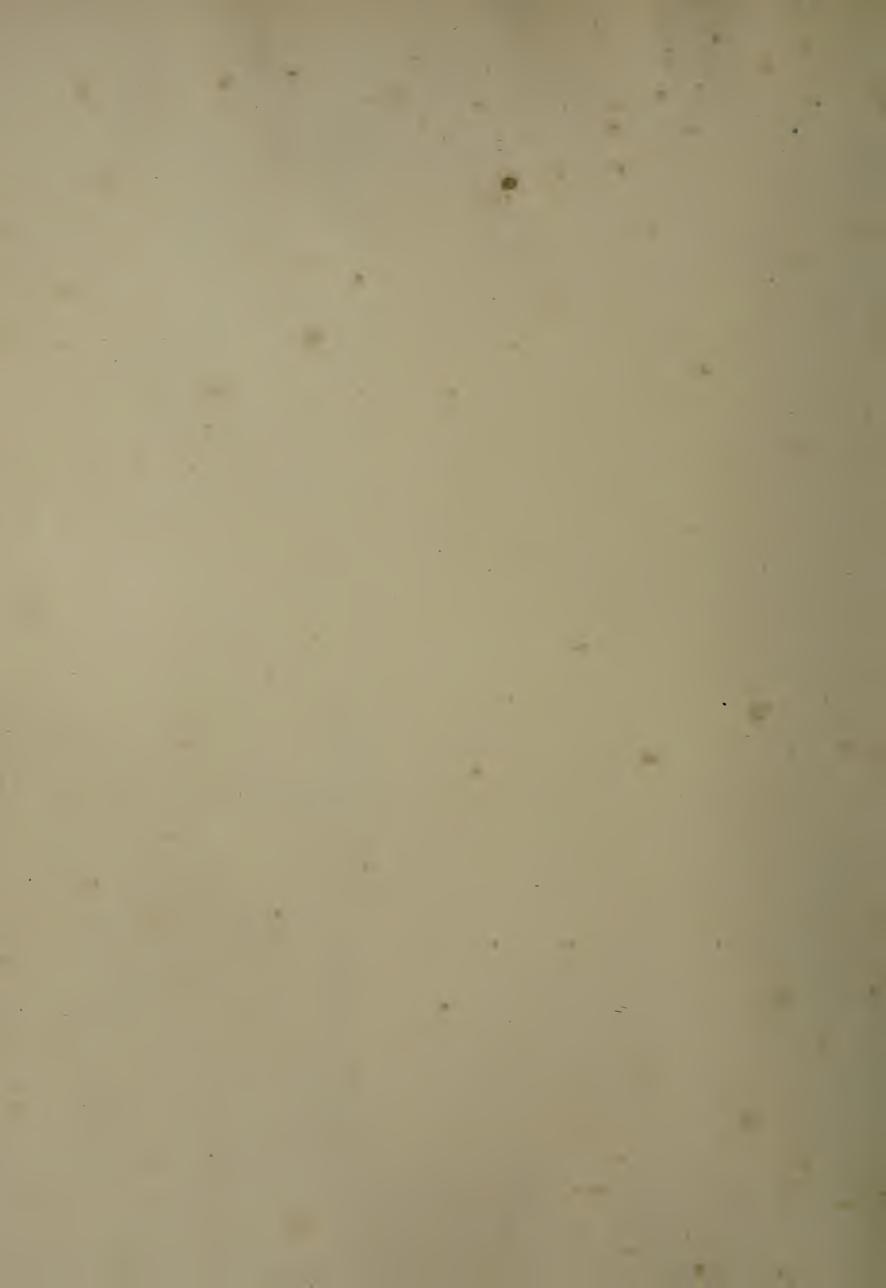
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